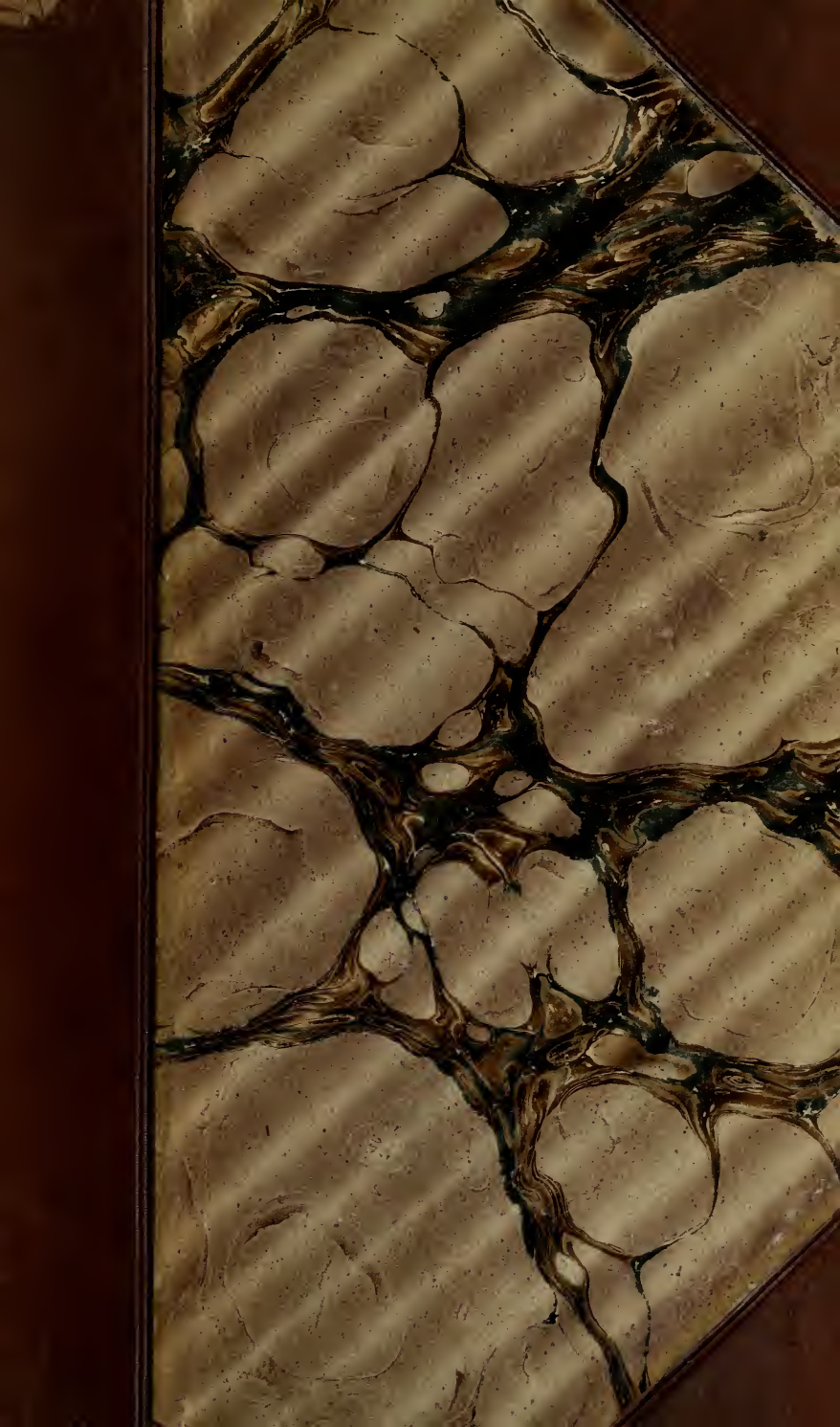

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ENGLAND'S FOREIGN POLICY.

BY

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ENGLAND'S FOREIGN POLICY.

WITHOUT seeking to solve the mystery of the signature "G." attached to the remarkable article on "England's Foreign Policy," in a recent number of the *Fortnightly Review*, we may cordially agree with its opening statement that, "it is not only opportune but imperative that Englishmen should examine their position, and see facts as they are."

We cannot be far wrong either in assuming that this article is intended for a manifesto of the views of Her Majesty's Government, and a sort of semi-official answer to the charges of mismanagement in Egypt, by showing that our failure there is not owing to their vacillation and want of foresight, but is the necessary development of a large and statesmanlike imperial and foreign policy, the lines of which it is the object of the article to expound and advocate.

These lines are laid down in a series of propositions so ingeniously stated that, while many of them in their abstract form command universal assent, and are, in fact, truisms, yet, taken as a whole and in their practical effect,

they advocate a system of policy which is opposed to all the teachings of history, and which I am convinced the great majority of Englishmen would consider to be fraught with danger to the honour and interests of the empire.

Let us endeavour to state clearly the propositions laid down in the articles, as the proper lines of England's foreign policy:

1. The vast empire which we have created for ourselves must be maintained intact.

2. But on no account must the "heavy, vast, and ubiquitous responsibilities" of this empire be extended.

3. That, owing to the vast extension of military armaments on the Continent, it is impossible for England to exercise the preponderating influence in European affairs which she has done at former periods of history; and, this being the case, we shall accept the logic of facts, and, when "impotent to contest scruple to intermeddle."

4. That Germany, fortified by the alliance of Austria and Italy, is for the present, "arbiter of Europe," and with Germany we have no interest in common except that of peace; while we have every reason to regard the German Chancellor

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with distrust and dislike, because he has been guilty of "manipulating our simplicity and respect for international ethics to his own advantage."

5. With France and Russia, on the other hand, we are in contact at a variety of points, and have intimate and diversified relations. The main object of our policy ought therefore to be "to disarm the hostility of Russia and be unsparing in our efforts to arrive at an amicable understanding with France."

6. As regards Russia, the practical means of disarming her hostility is to be found in withdrawing our traditional antagonism to her in Eastern Europe, and leaving the defence of Constantinople—if it is to be defended—to other Powers.

7. As regards France, the practical means of ensuring an amicable understanding, though less clearly stated and wrapped up in a cloud of phrases, appears to be to view with favour the growth of her Colonial Empire, and admit her to a share with us in the protectorate of Egypt commensurate with her "substantial and legitimate interests in the valley of the Nile."

8. By pursuing this policy, that is, by abnegating to a considerable extent our position as a European

> Power, and cultivating, by timely concessions, an *entente cordiale* with France and Russia, we may unite the *maximum* of advantage with the *minimum* of responsibility, and possibly hope to attain a position analogous to that of the United States, in which our "simplicity and honesty" command such universal respect that we are able, without risk of having to resort to the hateful necessity of war, to assert a sort of moral Monroe doctrine, which will enforce a command of "hands off" on any Power which might be wicked enough to covet any portion of our existing empire.

This is, I believe, what "G." himself would admit to be a fair statement, almost in his own words, of his views of foreign policy; and it is substantially identical with the policy which has been defended, with so much passionate earnestness, by Mr. Gladstone in his recent speeches on the Egyptian question. It is, as far as I know, the only answer possible to the charge of incompetence in the management of Egyptian affairs, *viz.* that the *minor* object, that of consolidating our position in that country by a resolute acceptance of our responsibilities, has been thrown away, not from blindness or vacillation, but deliberately and of forethought, in order to secure the *major* object of establishing an *entente cordiale* with France.

I proceed to review the above propositions, in order

to see how far such a policy seems calculated to carry out what is admitted to be the primary axiom from which we all start, "that the vast empire which we have created for ourselves must be maintained intact."

The second proposition is really the key-note to the whole scheme of policy propounded for our acceptance.

A certain school of politicians are never weary of groaning over the "heavy, vast, and ubiquitous responsibilities" of our existing empire. They accept it as far as a few faint words go, as a disagreeable fact, though they would have opposed every successive step by which that empire was created, but they oppose all and every extension of these responsibilities, and seek any opportunity of *minimizing* them.

This is not the spirit in which empires are made, nor that in which they are maintained. On the contrary, the appearance of this spirit of lassitude and shrinking from the sacrifices entailed by extensive empire, is invariably, as it was with Imperial Rome, the first symptom of decline and fall. An empire can only be either made or maintained by a nation which retains the bold and buoyant spirit, which, while it does not seek for fresh wars or court fresh conquests, does not shrink from them when they come, in the course of Providence, as necessary developments of the great mission with which it is charged.

This will be best illustrated by a practical instance, for in the policy of an empire the instance is every-

thing, the theory nothing. The real statesman is he who dominates theories, and is not dominated by them; who has the courage to discard the vain idol of consistency; and the insight to see through phrases to facts, and do the right thing at the right time.

Now turn to the recent annals of our Indian Empire, and take the practical instance of the annexation of the Punjaub. We did not seek it, we did not invite the movement of the Sikh soldiery which led to it. On the contrary, in Lord Dalhousie's memorable words, "he had longed for peace, he had prayed for peace, but if they were bent on war, war they shall have and with a vengeance." And with a vengeance they had it; and when their army was utterly crushed, there was no hesitation, no half measures, the Punjaub was annexed, with the result that in a few years it became the most prosperous and loyal province of the empire, and the sheet anchor of its salvation when the hurricane of the Mutiny swept over it from Lahore to the gates of Calcutta.

Suppose that instead of Lord Dalhousie, a Governor-General had ruled in India who was wedded to the principles of "G.'s" article and Mr. Gladstone's speeches. He would have said, "Surely our Indian Empire is extensive enough already without crossing the Indus." He would have magnified the difficulties of dealing with a hostile population, and felt sentimental scruples as to suppressing an interesting nationality.

The result, in all probability, would have been that he would have adopted some half measure, such as setting

up a nominally independent Government under the infant Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, with a British Resident, and some fantastic semblance of a Constitution in the form of an Assembly of Sikh notables.

Had such a course been adopted, let those who know anything of Indian history say what would have become of our Indian Empire in the crisis of the Mutiny.

Nor is this a solitary instance. The annexations of Scinde, Oude, the Central Provinces, and British Burmah are all cases directly in point, in which vastly increased security to our existing empire, and enormous benefit to great masses of population, have been the result of resolute policy, while that which is now proclaimed as the more safe and cautious course would, demonstrably, have led to the most serious complications and disastrous results.

These instances furnish what may be called the positive proof; the negative proof is unfortunately only too clearly demonstrated by the lamentable failure of a half-hearted and irresolute policy in Egypt.

It is quite clear that our present embarrassments there are all traceable to one cause, viz., the excessive anxiety to minimize our responsibilities, and the belief that it was possible to do so by adopting half measures, by refusing to look facts in the face, and by verbal disclaimers.

There is one test by which we can always judge of the wisdom of a past policy. If we had to do things over again, should we do them as they have been done,

or differently? Tried by this test there is no one of the crucial steps of our Egyptian Policy, since Tel-el-Kebir, which the universal verdict of public opinion, both in England and throughout Europe, would not pronounce to have been either taken wrongly or taken too late.

If we had to do the thing over again, should we have allowed a Government, which existed only by our support, to send an army under an English commander on a most hazardous and almost desperate expedition, and think we could escape the obvious consequences to us of a disaster, by saying that the Soudan was beyond the sphere of our operations? And when the news of that disaster reached us, should we have failed to realise its gravity and take prompt military measures to prevent the conflagration from spreading? Should we not have sent General Graham's force to Suakim at once, when he could have relieved Sinkat, opened the route to Berber and Khartoum, and converted General Gordon's mission into a success, in all human probability, without shedding a drop of blood? Should we have allowed the gallant garrison of Sinkat to be massacred almost within sight of English ships, and adopted the miserable half measure of sending a rabble of undisciplined policemen under Baker, to be cut to pieces in attempting to relieve Tokar? The same fatal policy has led to the still graver difficulties which have overtaken us in every branch, financial and political, of our administration of Egypt proper. For two years we have had practically *carte*

blanche to do as we liked in Egypt. France had withdrawn from the field, and no other European Power thought of interfering with us. The task of maintaining order, improving the condition of the Fellahs, and giving the country the benefits of good administration and improved commerce and credit, was not intrinsically more difficult than had been dealt with over and over again with perfect ease and success by Englishmen in India. And yet the humiliating result in Egypt has been failure everywhere, until the country has been brought to the very verge of bankruptcy and anarchy, and we are brought face to face with a state of things in which we must either scuttle out of Egypt with ignominy, or make far greater efforts and sacrifices, both military and financial, than were ever contemplated, or would ever have been necessary, if a more resolute policy had been adopted from the first.

The demonstration is, therefore, perfect, that if we wish to preserve our empire, we must be prepared to incur responsibilities and face dangers, under the penalty of having either to lose what we already possess, or to face far greater dangers, and make far larger sacrifices, in doing later what ought to have been done sooner.

Notwithstanding, therefore, a few vague and faint-hearted phrases about preserving the integrity of the empire, it is evident that the root of the matter goes down deeper, and that those who incessantly preach the doctrine of minimizing our responsibilities, really mean that extended empire is a burden rather than a blessing

The opposite conviction is so rooted in the instincts of the British nation, that it might almost seem like demonstrating one of Euclid's axioms, to argue the question seriously. But when an active, though small school of politicians openly advocate those principles, and when the Prime Minister of England, a statesman of the deservedly high influence and character of Mr. Gladstone, never opens his mouth in a debate on foreign policy without giving utterance, with all the energy of passionate conviction, to sentiments which, whether consciously or not, tend directly to the same conclusions as those of Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Mr. Labouchere, it is time for those who hold with equally sincere convictions to the opposite belief, to give reasons for the faith that is in them, that the first duty of a citizen of the British Empire—a duty far above all consideration of party or of domestic policy—is to hand that empire down to his sons no less great and glorious than he received it from his fathers.

The arguments for a peace-at-any-price, or anti-Imperial policy, are partly of a material and partly of a moral nature. The material arguments are that, if we had no Colonial and no Indian Empire, we should escape from nearly all our anxieties and responsibilities, save the necessity for large navies and armies, economise expenditure, reduce taxes, and be able to devote our undivided attention to questions of domestic reform.

In short, all the arguments are repeated which, from the days of Demosthenes downwards, have been used to

gain the ear of a democracy by counselling ignoble ease rather than noble effort.

The moral arguments are more respectable. Men of scrupulous conscience see that extended empire tends to involve us in frequent wars, of the abstract justice of many of which we may feel doubtful; and they say, "Rather than have the guilt of shedding innocent blood on our souls we will give up the empire."

This I believe to be, at bottom, the view of men like Sir Wilfrid Lawson, and it is impossible not to respect it, but it is the view of a Quaker (using the word in no sense of ridicule or opprobrium) rather than of a statesman.

Providence works out its great designs in a spirit which is as far removed as possible from that of a narrow scrupulosity. Two hundred millions of human beings sleep this night in security in India, because British statesmen waged wars, and British soldiers fought battles, over which Sir Wilfrid Lawson would have groaned, as unjustifiable bloodshed, and Gladstone would have denounced, in accents of indignant eloquence, as undue extensions of our responsibilities, and interference with native races struggling for independence.

In all these cases, extremes are false. "Jingoism" is the reaction of patriotic feeling carried to an unwise extent against "peace-at-any-price." "Peace-at-any-price" is the equally unwise and one-sided reaction against the exaggerations of "Jingoism." If we wish to form a just estimate of the advantages and disadvantages of extended

empire, we must look at large results, and endeavour to strike a fair balance.

First, as regards material results. There can be no reasonable doubt that the extension of our vast empire has been a great material benefit to a large portion of the inhabitants of the globe. This, of itself, ought to be conclusive, for the true happiness of a nation, as of an individual, lies not in selfish ease or repose, but in working strenuously, with its full faculties, in accordance with what religious men call the designs of Providence, and scientific men call the developments of Nature.

But to take a narrower view of it, we have a population of 30,000,000 living on an island which does not produce food for half the number. How are the extra 15,000,000 to live, if the markets for our industry, the channels of our commerce, and the sources of our supplies of food and raw materials are even partially closed against us? And how long would they remain open, if our power declined, and hostile influences and tariffs obstructed our trade with India, and with our Colonies?

Again the reduction of our Estimates, which is held out as the principal inducement to an anti-imperial policy, would be very short-lived unless we were prepared to abandon altogether our position as a free and independent nation. The hostility of Philip of Spain, of Louis XIV., of Napoleon, and of Nicholas I., was directed against our freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and constitutional liberty, quite as much as against our foreign possessions. A weak England

means, an England which may be obliged at any moment, either to muzzle the press, give up political refugees, and change its institutions, or risk a war with a superior Power. Estimates are never unduly reduced without having shortly to be unduly raised, and there is no system of insurance so economical in the long run as that of paying a steady and sufficient premium against all probable risks. Again the prosperity of trade, with the ever increasing complexity of international relations, depends more and more every day on political confidence and is liable to be affected by panics, and no weak nation, especially one which has been strong and is declining, can be long safe from panics.

The rise of the German power has made us almost forget what the state of things was when the Duke of Wellington raised his warning voice against the state of our army, and when a round-robin of French colonels led to the Volunteer movement as a protection against the risk of invasion from our partner in the *entente cordiale.*

Many more material advantages of a great empire might be enumerated, and lessons drawn from the material decline of historical empires which have fallen from greatness, but the moral advantages are those upon which I prefer to dwell. It is a great privilege to be a citizen of no mean empire. The saying, *noblesse oblige,* which has been the incentive to so many heroic actions, is necessarily of narrow appli-

cation in the limited sense of nobility of family. But, in the wider sense of nobility of race, it is the precious possession of every citizen high and low. It is the one animating principle which, with the mass of the people, inspires high ideas and converts the simplest lout of a Tommy Atkins from the plough-tail, into the invincible British soldier who stood on the bloody ridge of Inkerman and closed up the ranks of the shattered squares of Waterloo. The same spirit, born of the conscious pride of being a citizen of a great empire, and having an historic fame to sustain, translates itself in Civil life into the energy and hardihood which spread commerce, win wealth, and colonise deserts. I speak as one of a nation who have this feeling perhaps in a more intense degree than any other, for it is duplicated by the general pride of belonging to the great British Empire, and by the special pride of Scottish ancestry, and I am certain that it is the main cause why Scotchmen are to be found pushing their fortunes, and as a rule getting on, in all quarters of the world. They are brought up in the idea that they are bound to stand or fall in the ranks of life, whether it be against bullets and bayonets or against poverty and privation, as their forefathers did at Bannockburn, and the result is that, as a rule, they stand and conquer.

Destroy this spirit and you poison the very springs of life that give vigour to a nation. Hence, the most fatal thing a Government can do is to make the nation feel that it is made to do things which wound its self-

respect, and cause it to feel ashamed of itself. My chief indictment against the Egyptian policy of the Government is that it has constantly been doing such things. Our treatment of General Hicks was discreditable to us; the massacre of the gallant garrison of Sinkat, and capture of their helpless women and children almost within sight of British ships and hearing of British guns, was a disgrace to us ; so was the slaughter of the rabble under Baker sent to do the work of British soldiers; and last comes the crowning ignominy of the practical desertion of Gordon, and the cold remark that he is free to get out of Khartoum if he can, leaving the garrisons he was sent to rescue to their fate, and those who have assisted him, on the faith of his being a British envoy, to the tender mercies of the Mahdi.

Can any candid man, be he Liberal, Conservative, or Radical, deny that these things have sent a thrill of shame and indignation throughout the country, and have caused sorrow to the friends and exultation to the enemies of England in every nation of Europe ?

Let us turn now to the more immediate and practical portion of "G.'s" article, that, namely, which relates to "the principles that ought to guide England in her foreign policy."

Translated into plain English they amount to this—that, seeing that France and Russia are the only two Powers from which we have anything to fear, our policy ought to be to cultivate an *entente cordiale* with them, and with this view to coax them into good behaviour

by conciliation and concession. Now, as regards the importance of preserving friendly relations with these two Powers, especially with France, there cannot be a doubt; but the *petitio principii* involved in the second assumption, that the way to effect this is by exchanging civil phrases and making substantial concessions, is opposed alike to all reason and to all experience. France is about the last of all nations to which, if you give an inch, you can feel any assurance that it will not lead to asking for an ell. "G." refers to the incompatibility of French character with ours as the reason for the long historic antagonism of the two nations. But this goes a very short way to explain it. I do not know that there is any great compatibility between the English and German characters, or that Englishmen get on any better in social relations with Prussians than they do with Parisians; and yet, if we look back on the history of the last two hundred years, we find that for about one-fourth of the time we have been at war with France and never once with Germany.

We have had four series of great wars with France during this period: two of them, those of Louis XIV. and Napoleon, to save our own independence and that of Europe from the establishment of an insolent and aggressive military preponderance; two others, those of Chatham and of American Independence, for Colonial and Indian Empire.

These did not arise from mere incompatibility of temper, but partly from the logic of facts and geographical

position, and partly from the circumstance that the traits of French character which are antipathetic to ours are such as make her at all times a dangerous neighbour.

The basis of the French character is very much what it was in the time of Julius Cæsar, and, with much that is amiable and admirable, there is a fund of what is called "Chauvinism"—lightness, fickleness, excitability, passion for display and military glory—which is easily worked on by designing demagogues or despots, and has, over and over again, been the cause of involving the country in useless wars.

If anyone thinks this temper is a thing of the past let him refer to the history of the last thirty years, and see how many wars France has been engaged in, and how many of them have been wars which would have commended themselves to the judgment of a sober and sensible people as necessary wars for any real French interest. France in the last thirty years has had four great wars—the Crimean, the Italian, the Mexican, and the Franco-German—in addition to minor wars, such as those of Tunis, Tonquin, and Madagascar.

Of none of these can it be said that it was a necessary war, or a war likely to prove a paying investment to France for the blood and treasure which it was sure to cost.

With a nation of this temper it is idle to think that an exchange of courtesies can give any solid security for lasting peace; or that concessions can safely be made where there is any chance of their leading to further

demands. Above all, joint action at distant points, and in complicated details of administration, is certain to lead to difficulties. English and French Governments may possibly agree on general principles, but English and French officials, in a country like Egypt, are absolutely certain to quarrel; and in a contest of intrigue the French are pretty sure to beat us; so that we should soon find ourselves in a position where we had either to take a secondary part, with paramount interests, or to assert our rights by force, at the risk of a war with France.

Such a war would be the greatest possible calamity for both countries; but the chance of averting it is to be found mainly by preserving a clear and unambiguous attitude, which, while courteous and conciliatory, is at the same time firm and decided. To ensure permanent peace with France, she ought to know that it is dangerous to play a game of brag with England, and that war with us would be a most serious and perilous undertaking. For this object the first principle of English foreign policy ought always to be to strengthen ourselves as much as we can against the always possible contingency of some fresh outbreak of French aggression, and, in her own interest as well as ours, not to tempt her by any show of weakness or irresolution, any insufficiency in our armaments, or any isolation from our natural allies, to depart from the paths of prudence and moderation.

This brings me to what is, after all, the most important practical feature of the policy propounded for our acceptance, viz., our relations with Germany.

The views put forward by "G." seem rather to reflect the personal feelings of a disappointed diplomatist, than the far-seeing policy of a real statesman. We are told that Germany is now the greatest Continental Power, and the arbiter of Europe. We are told that we have with her in common that which is by far the most important of all interests, the preservation of peace, and absolutely no points of collision upon minor matters. The conclusion of common sense would seem to be—"Here is the Power with which we ought to cultivate relations of cordial friendship." But no; we are counselled to maintain towards Germany an attitude of distrust and hostility, for the most extraordinary of all reasons, that Prince Bismarck has been wicked enough to "manipulate our simplicity and respect for international ethics to his own advantage."

In the first place, if the charge were true, whose fault is it? There is nothing in the past history or present position of England, to make her the simpleton and dupe of Europe. But the charge is absolutely untrue. In what matter has Bismarck led us on to the ice and deserted us, or where is the advantage gained by him and lost by us, in recent diplomacy? On the contrary, the success of Bismarck's policy in founding a great central European State, whose interest it is to preserve peace, and whose power is overwhelming to support it, has been of the greatest possible advantage to England, and given us a position of security such as we had never previously enjoyed. If we want instances of a Power which has

"manipulated our simplicity," I would ask what Power was it which, after having led us into complications about Spanish affairs, threw us over by the Spanish marriages? who, after the Crimean war, changed front and courted the alliance of Russia, and when we disarmed, pushed on naval armaments until the French Navy was for a time superior to that of England? Was it a fear of German or of French aggression that led to the Volunteer movement? Or, more recently, who took the lead in advocating the claims of Greece and Montenegro, and left us in the lurch when it came to be a question of enforcing them? Who committed us to the Dual Control, the Law of Liquidation, and the support of the Khedive against his mutinous army? and whose fleet steamed out of Alexandria before the first shot was fired?

The answer to these questions must be asked in Paris rather than in Berlin.

In fact, the policy of the *entente cordiale* with France is no new experiment, and no invention of Lord Palmerston's. We have had it three times in the course of history—once, and most completely, in the reign of Charles II., again with Louis Philippe, and once again with Louis Napoleon. The first was the most discreditable chapter in our history, and, as a practical result, landed us in the great wars of William III. and Queen Anne to retrieve our position. The second brought us twice to the very verge of war with France about Egypt and Tahiti, and ended in the deception of the Spanish marriages. The third cost us the Crimean war, and

consolidated the power of an adventurer who crushed out the liberties of France under a demoralising despotism, while his erratic and unprincipled foreign policy kept Europe in constant alarm, and inaugurated the system of excessive armaments under which it is now groaning. On the other hand, during this long period, Germans and Englishmen have never fired a shot at one another in anger, while they have stood shoulder to shoulder in almost every field of battle from Blenheim to Waterloo.

Surely the teachings of history should go for something in laying down the lines of a policy which is to last, and stand the wear and tear of practical application, and not be a mere cloud of phrases strung together to meet the momentary exigency of palliating our failure in Egypt.

We are told to look facts in the face. Why should we hesitate to do so, and admit, what everyone feels to be the fact, that a cordial friendship with Germany and her allies affords by far the best security for the peace of Europe, and for "maintaining our vast Empire intact," without the necessity of fighting for its defence?

As regards Russia, the same line of policy is advocated as with France, viz., that of an *entente cordiale*, to be purchased by conciliation and concession.

In this case the danger of such a course is less, for the chances of misunderstandings, and risks of conflicts with Russia are less than with France. "G." says that "for more than forty years we have now regarded Russia as our natural enemy." I have always thought

this a mistake. Russia is an old historical ally, and, apart from the Quixotic enterprise of trying to regenerate Turkey and making ourselves the champions of the decaying future of Mussulman misgovernment over the rising Christian nationalities of the East, we have no grounds whatever for collision with Russia, except in Central Asia. And here it is our own fault if we do not, at any rate for a generation to come, make our Indian Empire absolutely secure against any serious danger of invasion.

To do this two cardinal maxims must be kept in view: 1st. So to govern India that there is no serious wish on the part of any considerable part of the native population to exchange British rule for anarchy or for Russian domination. 2nd. So to deal with Affghanistan as to make the Affghans always feel that, as our allies, their independence is secure, while, with a Russian alliance, it would be endangered; and that, as our friends, they can rely on our support against foreign invaders.

In addition to this, we should proceed—not hurriedly or in a panic, but gradually as our financial means admit—to strengthen our military frontier by forts, entrenched camps, and connecting railways, so that an invading army, which had threaded its way through 500 miles of hostile tribes and mountain passes, should find the difficulties of its task only beginning when it approached our frontier. With these easy and obvious precautions we can afford to view with equanimity those advances of Russian power in Central Asia, which are inevitable when a civilised

Power comes in contact with a loose congeries of semi-barbarous tribes.

But here, as in the case of France, the true way to avoid misunderstandings with Russia is to keep in mind the old saying, *Si vis pacem pare bellum;* to be perfectly friendly, but at the same time perfectly frank and firm in our language; and not to repeat the mistake which drifted us into the Crimean war, of tempting Russia by our vacillation and weakness to take up a position from which she could not recede with honour, but which she would never have taken up if we had from the first used plain language, and told her that advance beyond a certain point meant war with England.

In the present case this point is easily named: Affghanistan is the outpost of India, and Herat is the outpost of A ffghanistan. Whoever attacks these attacks England, and there must be no mistake that it means war. On the other hand, as long as Russia respects the independence of Affghanistan, we are willing and ready to be on friendly terms with her, and have no wish to make the key-stone of our foreign policy to oppose and thwart her at every turn.

Beyond this it would be decidedly unwise to carry the attempt to establish an *entente cordiale* with Russia, especially if, as "G." recommends, it is to be accompanied by a still closer understanding with France, and a hostile attitude towards Germany. The great danger looming in the future is that of an alliance between France and Russia, on the basis of a war for the recovery of her

lost provinces by France, and for the conquest of Constantinople by Russia.

Such a war, in which two millions of French and Russian soldiers would be arrayed on one side, against two millions of Germans, Austrians, and Italians on the other, would be the greatest the world has ever seen; and it is clearly for our interest to avert it. But a policy on the part of England of cordial friendship towards France and Russia, and scarcely veiled hostility towards Germany, is eminently calculated to promote it. The great security against it is the belief that the German league is too strong for the united force of France and Russia, and the distrust of one another felt by these two Powers. France hesitates to incur the risk of another German war on the doubtful promise of Russian aid; and Russia has not sufficient confidence in the stability of any French support to induce her to break with the many personal and traditional ties which connect the courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin. The intervention of England, as the mutual friend of France and Russia and antagonist of Germany, is the very thing of all others calculated to diminish the restraints and add to the incentives which must weigh with French and Russian statesmen in shaping their policy.

For England, after all, though not a first-rate military Power for Continental warfare, is still a Great Power, and would weigh heavily in the scale into which her alliance was thrown. She is the first naval, and the first financial Power in the world, and her soldiers, if few

in number, are excellent in quality. However timid politicians may wish it, she cannot alter the fact that she is one of the Great Powers of Europe, and as such cannot isolate herself entirely from the varying complications of European politics. There cannot be a vainer dream than to imagine that it is possible for England to live alone, harmless and inoffensive, a Quaker among armed nations, trusting to the respect felt for her good intentions, to enable her to enforce a Monroe rule against any attempt on her possessions.

The instance quoted, that "the American Government had no sooner intimated their determination that France should depart from Mexico than that departure was effected," is a strange mis-reading of contemporary history. Louis Napoleon withdrew his troops from Mexico because, the war of Secession being at an end, the United States were prepared to back their demand by 500,000 victorious soldiers, led by generals such as Grant and Sharman. Is anyone simple enough to suppose that he would have done so, in response to an appeal to the reasonableness of the Monroe doctrine that the respect due to the shades of Washington and Franklin?

An equally flagrant mis-reading of history is when the authority of Palmerston is invoked as having made the *entente cordiale* with France the cardinal point of his policy. It is truly said, "The dominant characteristic of Palmerston's policy was common sense—the shrewd and practical recognition of existing facts." Add to this

the possession, in an eminent degree, of the quality known by the homely name of "pluck," which is the foundation of all real greatness of character, both in the individual and the nation. This is the reason why so many, not "despondent" or "blustering," but sincere and rational patriots, Liberals as well as Conservatives, say, "Oh that Palmerston were alive!" to have dealt with the splendid opportunity thrown into our hands by the turn of affairs in Egypt, in the spirit with which he dealt, for instance, with the Egyptian difficulty of his own time, when Mahomet Ali, under the protection of France, conquered Syria, overran Asia Minor, and threatened to march on Constantinople. There was no cardinal policy then of clinging to the *entente cordiale*, and trying to conciliate France by fair words and concessions; but, on the contrary, a prompt rejoinder by an alliance with Germany and Russia, which obliged France to withdraw her pretensions, and averted the imminent danger of a European war.

It is true, Palmerston allied himself with Louis Napoleon, for the specific purpose of checking the aggression of Russia in the East. I have always thought this policy was a mistake, for it tended, for many years, to make us regard Russia as our natural enemy, distracting our attention from dangers nearer home; it committed us to a hopeless task, the regeneration of Turkey; it alienated from us natural allies who had a deeper interest than we had in defending Constantinople; and it consolidated the throne and strengthened the military *prestige* of a

dreamy adventurer, whose restless and uncertain policy kept Europe for many years in a state of alarm, and was mainly responsible for transforming it into an armed camp.

That Palmerston saw this quite clearly, and was as far as possible from making the *entente cordiale* with France the key-stone of his permanent policy, after the conclusion of the Crimean war, and the death of Nicholas, I am in a position to state from personal knowledge.

When, on the sudden death of Mr. Wilson, I was asked to go to India as Finance Minister, I had a conversation with Lord Palmerston. I said to him: "You want me to go to India to doctor a sick Budget with a deficit of £6,000,000—that is a question of military reduction, and the possibility of military reduction depends on peace; tell me candidly what you think of the prospects of peace, that I may regulate my financial policy accordingly."

Lord Palmerston replied, in words which made a deep impression on me, and which are as fresh in my memory as if I had heard them yesterday: "I do not trust the man at the Tuileries an inch farther than I can see him, but for the next two or three years, which is enough for your purpose, I think we are fairly safe of peace, therefore go in for reduction."

Observe that Palmerston expressed no alarm as to Russia, and his remarks had exclusive reference to the shifting policy and sinister projects of the French Emperor, with whom "G." would have us believe he was, up to the day of his death, on the most cordial and intimate terms.

Had Palmerston been alive I cannot doubt that he would have eagerly grasped the opportunity, which Fortune threw in our way, of escaping from the embarrassments of a partnership with France in Egypt, and an international control—under the Law of Liquidation—in the interest of the bondholders, by the refusal of all the other Powers to join us while the enterprise of restoring order was one of difficulty and danger. We had one of those rare opportunities which never recur, of securing our route to India, establishing a British protectorate in Egypt, with results as beneficial to the natives as to commerce and credit, getting rid of endless complications and occasions of conflict in the future with France and other Powers, and raising our character still higher throughout the world by the successful accomplishment of a grand mission in the interests of Christianity and civilisation.

We have thrown these chances away, and landed ourselves in a quagmire of difficulties—military, political, and financial—in the vain attempt to *minimize* our responsibilities, and from the want, on the part of our Government, of the qualities of "shrewd and practical recognition of existing facts" and "manly British pluck," which were the characteristics of Palmerston. And now we, or rather those who represent us, seek to palliate the failure by setting up a pusillanimous theory of deference to France, pettish aversion to Germany, and abnegation of our position as one of the Great Powers of Europe.

Was I right or was I wrong in saying, in a recent debate, that Gladstone's Government was writing the first chapter of the history of the "Decline and Fall of the British Empire?"

I say this with pain, for I have been for many years a Liberal, and even an Advanced Liberal; and a sincere admirer and supporter of Mr. Gladstone in most of his great measures of domestic policy. But I have been a close student of history, and I am convinced that the issues involved in foreign policy are vastly more important than any domestic questions, which, if not settled this year can be settled next, and where, if mistakes are made, they can be discovered and corrected. That a Prime Minister of England should say that the events passing in Egypt only affect us in a secondary degree, is, to my mind, the most amazing utterance; and the frame of mind that, in the deep anxiety felt by the country and by Parliament in these events, can see only an obstructive desire to delay the Franchise Bill absolutely confounds me with astonishment.

It is not very safe to hazard a prediction, but this I will venture to say, that if there is anything in the teachings of experience, a persistence in the principles of policy laid down in "G.'s" manifesto, and illustrated by Mr. Gladstone's speeches, and by the action of the Government in Egypt, will, in all human probability, make the history of the 20th century a repetition of that of the

18th, viz., that of one long war between England and France for Colonial and Indian supremacy.

With such a conviction, I cannot but feel that the claims of country are superior to those of party, and feeble as my voice may be, that I am bound to raise it whenever and wherever I can get a hearing, to uphold the principles and policy which have built up this great empire, and to expose and refute those which would degrade and destroy it.

S. LAING.

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